



PLUS See the crater, the Navajo Code Talkers Memorial, and more in this slideshow.

RARE SNOW frosts Meteor Crater, Arizona, at sunset.

loom, thinking he could reuse the wood for a sculpture project. Tyler's grandmother was eager to master weaving as her mother had, so Lindsay arranged to send her the device. What an unexpected connection between Pennsylvania and Arizona!

After lunch, we visited Window Rock for which the town is named, and the nearby Navajo Code Talkers Memorial. The legendary Code Talkers served with the Marines in the Pacific during World War II, creating and employing a Navajo-language-based battlefield radio code that was never cracked by the Japanese. The program was so successful it remained classified for two decades after the war, following which the remaining participants and their survivors were

honored with Congressional Gold Medals.

"Would you like to see Meteor Crater?" I asked when we launched for Flagstaff.

"What's that?" Leslie asked. Neither she nor Lindsay had heard of the renowned Arizona landmark.

This called for a detour, so I steered us over one of Earth's largest and best-preserved terrestrial craters, near Winslow. Again, our normally expressive guests sat mostly silent. Only after their visit did I learn that the views on these flights had profoundly affected them in ways I could never have imagined.

SPACE TRAVELERS

VIEWING EARTH THROUGH FRESH EYES

My favorite moment was circling that huge crater on the way back to Flagstaff from Window Rock," said my sister Leslie when asked what she'd most enjoyed about her Arizona holiday. "Having always been fascinated with sci-fi and outer space, it was branded in my brain that this is the closest I'll ever get to the cosmos!"

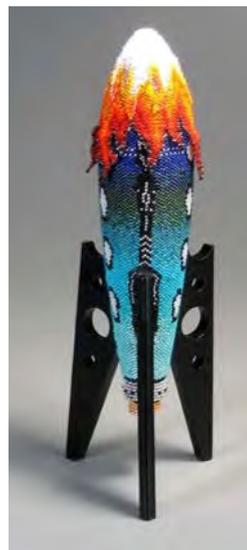
Leslie and her husband, Lindsay, recently visited from Philadelphia. Along with driving trips to the Grand Canyon and the historic mining town of Jerome, I'd offered flying primarily to access additional destinations during their stay.

Our first aerial excursion was to Prescott, where we viewed a photo show, wandered art galleries, and toured the 150-year-old log Governor's Mansion. Instead of driving the three-hour round trip, we flew 35 minutes each way. En route, we surveyed the Red Rock-Secret Mountain Wilderness and previewed mountainside Jerome from above.

Everyone seemed to enjoy that trip, so I proposed another that seemed purely selfish at the time: to visit my Navajo pilot buddy Tyler while he was home from college. There wasn't time to drive seven hours round-trip to Window Rock, but it's only an hour away by *Flying Carpet*.

The vermilion Painted Desert and golden spires of the Navajo Nation over which we flew are so different from the rolling green beauty of Pennsylvania that I was surprised when our guests said little about it. After landing, we toured the Navajo Nation Museum. Then we met Tyler and his family for mutton stew and Navajo tacos, where our generous hosts delighted Lindsay and Leslie with "welcome" gifts.

"Can anyone in your family use a Navajo loom?" Lindsay asked. By incredible coincidence, a Philadelphia weaver friend had given Lindsay the languishing



REENTRY ROCKET (or Monday), NASA Space Art Collection. Design and glass beadwork by Leslie B. Grigsby. Woodworking and assembly by Lindsay Grigsby.

“Viewing the crater reminded me of being a little kid watching the moon landing,” Leslie told me. “A whole lifetime thinking of space and wishing I were an astronaut was fulfilled seeing that crater.” I suppose I shouldn’t have been surprised. Outside their day jobs, Leslie is a beadwork artist, and Lindsay a wood sculptor. Among other subjects, each crafts sci-fi and space pieces. Leslie fashions beadwork spacecraft, planets, and ray guns—one of her rockets is in NASA’s space-art collection—while Lindsay artistically interprets planetary orbits. Their favorite Arizona destination surprised me, too.

“No matter how magnificent the Grand Canyon,” said Leslie, “most memorable was flying to Window Rock. I’ve been enthralled with Navajo country and culture since reading Tony Hillerman’s Navajo detective novels as a child. It was fascinating seeing from above how hogans are situated in the landscape, and how all face East to welcome the sunrise. Over the years I’ve often pictured in my mind what Window Rock must look like. So there was a magical quality to arriving from the sky like the Native spirits described in those books.”

“Flying showed us things that would have been impossible to see from the ground,” Lindsay added. “It was incredible seeing everything from a bird’s-eye view. It made the journey that much more special.”

To think that I might not have offered those lofty views to our vacationing visitors. After all, there were plenty of attractions within driving distance. But travel by *Flying Carpet* delivered unforeseeable pleasures unique to their interests and experiences. Neither they nor I could have anticipated such outcomes until I invited them aloft. Yes, flying is about the journey at least as much as the destination. And viewing familiar sights through others’ fresh eyes brings new perspectives to our own. 🗨️

Greg Brown is an aviation author, photographer, and former National Flight Instructor of the Year 📶 (www.gregbrownflyingcarpet.com).
